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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

December 16, 2002

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Commissioner Phillip Shucet
Virginia Department of Transportation
1401 E Broad St
Richmond VA 23219

Dear Commissioner Shucet:

I am writing today to challenge the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to work with the Virginia State Police, the U.S. Park Police, the District of Columbia and the state of Maryland to improve accident response time and clear disabled vehicles from the region's major arteries.

Today there was an accident on the 14th Street Bridge tying up traffic on I-395, I-95, I-66, and the George Washington Parkway. This is unacceptable. I am aware that the Virginia State Police have a contract with a local towing service to clear accident scenes and broken down vehicles. However, because today's accident occurred on the 14th Street Bridge, which is under the jurisdiction of the District of Columbia, the accident was not cleared for several hours.

Residents of D.C. would not be affected by an accident on the 14th Bridge coming into D.C. Only the commuters of northern Virginia who must travel the bridge to commute to D.C. are affected. Therefore, I believe that it is the responsibility of VDOT to work to help the people of northern Virginia who must commute over the bridge. VDOT should work with D.C. to ensure tow services quickly arrive to the scene of an accident, whether in Virginia or D.C., to make sure that traffic is not delayed for the entire region.

Another example of the need for regional communication is the broken down bus on October 29 on the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The bus remained in the road for over three hours tying up traffic in the entire metro area. A line of communication is needed to bring a tow truck to the scene to relieve the congestion.

With predictions that this winter will bring severe weather, I also believe VDOT should take actions to ensure that traffic is not unnecessarily congested when winter storms strike. VDOT should implement a policy lifting HOV restrictions on I-95, I-395, and I-66 whenever the local schools close because of snow or weather emergencies. This would provide better access and more commuting options for those workers who still must drive into the nation's capital. This simple, common-sense effort would help northern Virginia in the event of a snow emergency.

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The Washington Metropolitan area must work together to solve traffic problems, especially when it comes to dealing accidents and disabled vehicles. I realize the Commonwealth of Virginia is experiencing severe financial difficulties, but I believe VDOT must take a more aggressive role in alleviating congestion in northern Virginia. When a bridge closes going into D.C. or Maryland, it's the people of Virginia who suffer.

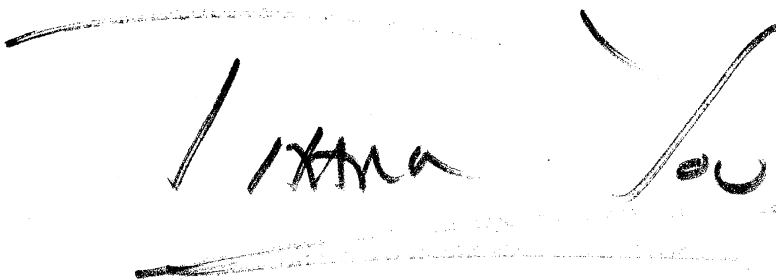
This is a quality of life concern for everyone who lives in northern Virginia. I look forward to hearing back from you on this most important issue.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress

FRW:jtg

A large, stylized handwritten signature, likely of Frank R. Wolf, is written across the bottom of the page. The signature is in dark ink and appears to be 'Frank R. Wolf' in a cursive, abbreviated style.